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INDIA AND CHINA AGREE TO RESUME KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, who is in Beijing on a two-day visit, held wide-ranging talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Monday

DIRECT FLIGHT SERVICES TO BE RESTARTED

During their talks, the two sides decided to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in the summer of this year. "The relevant mechanism will discuss the modalities for doing so as per existing agreements," a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said. They also agreed in principle to resume direct air services between the two countries

BOTH SIDES SHOULD SEIZE OPPORTUNITY: WANG

- "The two sides should seize the opportunity... commit to mutual understanding, mutual support, and mutual achievement," Wang said
- On resuming the provision of hydrological data and boosting other cooperation related to trans-border rivers, it was agreed to hold an early meeting of the India-China Expert Level Mechanism | P11

2025

MARKS 75 YEARS SINCE INDIA AND CHINA ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Waqf Bill gets JPC nod with 14 amendments

Report expected to be tabled in Parliament ahead of February 5 Delhi assembly polls

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) scrutinising the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill approved it on Monday, setting the tone for its tabling for discussion and passage during the forthcoming Budget session of Parliament.

While the panel led by BJP MP Jagadambika Pal adopted 14 amendments suggested by the ruling NDA members, all those proposed by the Opposition were rejected 10:16 by voice vote. The bill, introduced during the Monsoon session, had proposed 44 amendments to the Waqf Act, 1995.

While the Opposition was up in arms against the panel chairman for allegedly breaking rules and bulldozing the proceedings, Pal said that the amendments were put to vote in a democratic manner. However, DMK MP A Raja said, "The chairman himself called the names of the mover of the amendments (given by us) and he himself moved the amendments on our behalf and conducted the head count. And he announced the rejection of our amendments. We will move the Supreme Court if it becomes a bill."

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Pal said one of the alterations aims to empower the state government to appoint an officer to determine whether a property is Waqf or not — instead of the District Collector who was given absolute powers to do so in the proposed bill. In the Waqf Act 1995, that power is vested in survey commissioners and additional commissioners.

The panel also approved changes to another contentious provision that mandated the inclusion of two non-Muslim members in the Central Waqf Council and state Waqf Boards. It dropped the term mandatory and proposed changes in the composition of the Waqf Board by increasing it to three members, including a scholar.

Another change was on the 'Waqf by user' provision. While the bill knocked it off entirely, the panel approved amendments that said the the 'Waqf by user' law will not apply retrospectively, so long as the property is registered. However, Congress MP and JPC member Imran Masood contested the proposal saying 90% of Waqf properties are not registered. Speaking to this newspaper, Masood accused the government of trying to create unrest by bringing in the new bill.

WHAT IS NEW

- Right to appoint officer to determine whether a property is Waqf or not given to the state govt instead of the District Collector in proposed bill
- Mandatory clause to include 2 non-Muslims in Central Waqf Council and state Waqf Boards dropped. Proposes change in the composition of the Waqf Board by increasing it to three members, including a scholar

WHAT NEXT

- JPC will circulate final draft among the members on Tuesday
- It will meet on January 29 to adopt the report
- Report to be submitted to LS Speaker on January 31 and tabled in Parliament before Feb 5 Delhi polls

FETING NEW IDEAS, OLD WISDOM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

IMPACTFUL conversations and thought-provoking debates marked the 13th edition of the ThinkEdu Conclave, presented by SASTRA University, held at ITC Grand Chola in Chennai on Monday. A stellar lineup of speakers, from policymakers to academicians, reflected on the contemporary challenges and opportunities in education and beyond.

The day began with a Saraswati Vandana by the students of MOP Vaishnav College for Women, followed by ceremonial lighting of lamp. In his welcome address, Prabhu Chawla, editorial director of *The New Indian Express*, highlighted the legacy of ThinkEdu as India's leading education conclave, underscoring its commitment to fostering dialogue between modernity and traditional knowledge. Prabhu Chawla also cautioned against the over-reliance on artificial intelligence (AI), emphasising the importance of balancing progress with values.

NHRC Chairperson V Ramasubramanian inaugurates the 13th edition of ThinkEdu Conclave 2025 in Chennai by lighting the lamp on Monday; (from left) SASTRA University V-C S Vaidhyasubramaniam, Dinamani Editor K Vaidiyanathan, THIE CEO Lakshmi Menon and Editorial Director Prabhu Chawla are seen | P RAVIKUMAR

The inaugural session featured Justice V Ramasubramanian, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), who tackled the complex relationship between rights, duties, and the Indian soul. Moderated by Dinamani editor K Vaidiyanathan, Justice Ramasubramanian highlighted India's diversity as both a strength and challenge. He underscored the need to balance rights with duties to build a just society. He raised concerns about the delay by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in according accreditation to the NHRC.

Following this, Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament, delved into India's parliamentary proceedings. In a session moderated by senior journalist Kaveree Bamzai, Tharoor decried the rising animosity between the government and opposition, emphasising the need to restore trust and communication in Parliament.

Dr Ujwala Chakradeo, Vice-Chancellor of SNDT Women's University, and Prof Basuthkar J Rao, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hyderabad, shared insights into making campuses more inclusive in the session titled, "A Campus for Everyone: Making Higher Education Inclusive."

Prof Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar, UGC Chairman, spoke on the need to rebuild India's examination system in his session on "Testing Times." Moderated by Prof S Vaidhyasubramaniam, Kumar proposed adaptive testing models and emphasised aligning entrance exams with school curricula to reduce the reliance on coaching centres. In a forward-looking session on AI, Shekar Nair, Co-founder of Upekkha, tackled the hype and reality of AI. Nair emphasised the need to adapt to AI-driven changes in the workplace. Those who fail to embrace AI risk being replaced by it, he said.

Politics, culture, aspiration

The afternoon sessions shifted focus to political and cultural narratives. In "The Culture Project: Values for the Viksit Bharatiya," Mukunda CR, joint general secretary of the RSS, advocated for a three-language policy encompassing one's mother tongue, a regional language, and a career language.

INSIDE ASSESS PERFORMANCE, NOT DNA OF NHRC: RAMASUBRAMANIAN | P7 | THAROOR: ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE REWARDING THAN ATTENDING PARL | P7 | DIRECTOR TOLD ME NOT TO TAKE CHARACTERS HOME: KARTI | P7

BACK TO BATTERED HOME

Tens of thousands of Palestinians streaming into the most heavily destroyed parts of Gaza on Monday after Israel lifted its blockade in the north for the first time since the war with Hamas began, following a ceasefire pact | AP | P13

MUDA: HC reserves order on petition seeking CBI probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

TAKING on record the report of the investigation and accompanying documents submitted by the Lokayukta police in a sealed cover on the alleged irregularities in the allotment of 14 compensatory sites to BM Parvathy, wife of **Chief Minister Siddaramaiah**, by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), the Karnataka High Court on Monday reserved its judgment on a petition filed by a Mysuru-based social activist seeking to refer the case being probed by the Lokayukta police to CBI.

The court also directed the Lokayukta police not to file the final report of the probe before the Special Court for the trial of criminal cases against sitting and former MPs/MLAs till the pronouncement of the judgment. Justice M Nagaprasanna passed the order while reserving the verdict after the conclusion of the marathon hearing on the petition filed by Snehamayi Krishna.

Arguing for the petitioner, senior advocate Maninder Singh contended that the matter is required to be referred to the CBI for impartial probe since the high functionaries of the state are involved. Also, the CM should not function as he is under a cloud over his integrity. Nobody cast doubts over the probe by the Lokayukta police, but it has to go to the CBI in view of administrative and political compulsions on the Lokayukta agency, he argued.

Pointing out that the cabinet note, chief secretary's note and legal opinion are to favour Siddaramaiah in the matter, Singh said that to meet the ends of justice and in the interest of the public, the probe must be handed over to the CBI since there is no possibility of fairness by the state, in view of efforts already made to brush the case under the carpet.

Appearing for Devaraju, who sold the land to CM's brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy, senior advocate Dushyant Dave argued that the petition deserved to be dismissed as the same is gross abuse of process of law, since there is a delay of 20 years. Though the petitioner stated on oath that it requires probe by Lokayukta, which was created by way of statute, he again knocked on the doors of this court for a CBI probe only to embarrass the CM, he alleged. P4

HC stays ED summons to Siddu's wife, min Suresh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a relief to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife BM Parvathy and Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning Byrathi Suresh, the High Court of Karnataka on Monday stayed the summons issued to them by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) in connection with the alleged irregularities in allotment of MUDA sites.

Justice M Nagaprasanna passed the interim order staying the summons till February 10. Summons were issued to Parvathy, one of the accused in the case registered by the Lokayukta police, to appear on Tuesday, and Byrathi Suresh to appear on Monday to record their statements.

The interim order was passed after hearing the petitions filed by Parvathy and Suresh, questioning the legality of the summons issued by the central agency.

Senior counsels Sandesh Chouta and Vikram Huilgol, representing Parvathy, and senior counsel CV Nagesh, representing Suresh, argued that the summons were an offshoot of the order of the special court to register the crime on September 24, 2024. Parvathy is an accused in the predicate offence. P4

UTTARAKHAND

1ST STATE TO IMPLEMENT UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

CM Pushkar Singh Dhami announced UCC's implementation on Monday, saying "the constitutional and civil rights of people across all religions have become uniform" | P12

2 from Bihar attacked for not speaking Kannada, 3 arrested

PRAVEEN KUMAR @ Bengaluru

THREE people have been arrested for allegedly attacking two men from Bihar with a knife for not speaking Kannada at Lakkasandra Extension in Adugodi police limits.

The incident happened last Wednesday and the injured have been identified as MD Hasmath Hussain, 21, and MD Amir, 19, residents of Lakkasandra Extension.

Hussain, a mason, who suffered stab injuries, is undergoing treatment at a private hospital. Amir, an electrician, was discharged after treatment.

The autorickshaw-borne accused, who were drunk, approached Hussain and Amir, seeking directions for an address in Kannada. When Hussain and Amir said they could not speak Kannada, the trio started attacking them. Hussain and Amir, who were with three others, started running.

Hussein, who fell down, was caught by the accused. After assaulting Hussain, one of the accused stabbed him with the knife, the police said. P5

MODI, DON DISCUSS WEST ASIA, UKRAINE

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump discussed a range of issues, including the wars in West Asia and Ukraine, in their first telephonic conversation after the latter was sworn in as the 47th president of the United States. "Delighted to speak with my dear friend President @realDonaldTrump @POTUS," he said. "We are committed to a mutually beneficial and trusted partnership. We will work together for the welfare of our people and towards global peace, prosperity, and security," Modi wrote on X.

Modi congratulated Trump on his "historic second term", the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

The two leaders discussed various aspects of the wide-ranging bilateral Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and measures that could be taken to advance it, including in the areas of technology, trade, investment, energy, and defence, the PMO said in the statement.

They exchanged views on global issues, including the situation in West Asia and Ukraine, and reiterated their commitment to work together to promote global peace, prosperity, and security, it said.

They agreed to remain in touch and meet soon at a mutually convenient date.

Checks at U.S. gurudwaras for illegal immigrants

Officials from the US Department of Homeland Security have started visiting gurudwaras in New York and New Jersey to search for undocumented immigrants after Trump administration removed protections shielding religious places from immigration and customs enforcement actions | P11

PEAK-HOUR TRAFFIC FLATTENS

B'luru sees snarls throughout the day

AKNISREE KARTHIK @ Bengaluru

BENGALURU CITY is witnessing a 'flattening of peak-hour traffic', which is why people are getting stuck on roads even during non-peak hours.

Spread of business activity across the city, increase in the number of cars and two-wheelers, bus fare hike, haphazard growth of residential areas and employment zones have led to multiple 'origins' and 'destinations', contributing to the flattening of peak period, where traffic congestion is not restricted to peak hours alone anymore, according to experts.

PIC: SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

"I usually plan my trip avoiding peak hours so that I don't get stuck in traffic. However, in the past few months, no matter what time I start, except for late nights and early mornings, I am not able to avoid traffic. Commuting in the city has become a headache," Prakash Murugan, a businessman, said. CONTINUED ON P2